

The Unite logo, featuring the word 'Unite' in white, slanted text on a pink background.

ACTION LERT

The Unite the UNION logo, featuring a stylized white wave above the word 'unite' in lowercase and 'the UNION' in uppercase on a green background.

www.uniteunion.org

To all Unite officers and staff
– for shop stewards distribution

BRITISH AIRWAYS - VOTE SHOWS CABIN CREW REMAIN DETERMINED

For the fourth time in two years, cabin crew at British Airways have shown their determination to see justice, respect and dignity restored at BA by voting to take industrial action.

In a fantastic show of continued resilience, BA cabin crew have responded to continued attacks by British Airways on their union organisation as well as suspensions and dismissal of colleagues and the ignoring of collective agreements with a resounding yes vote to continued industrial action.

Ballot papers returned	6985
Number voting YES	5811 (83%)
Number voting NO	1170 (17%)

There were 4 spoilt ballot papers.

Unite General Secretary, Len McCluskey said after the vote was announced that; ***“this vote shows that cabin crew remain determined to win justice. We urge BA’s boardroom to see this as a clear message that they must think again about how to regain the trust and confidence of a significant part of their cabin crew operation”***

Commenting of opportunities for a negotiating settlement Len went on to say that; ***“We continue to be in discussion with the company to find a solution to this long running dispute”***

No notice of industrial action has yet been given to the company. We have 21 days to do so from close of the ballot and will discuss all options with our representatives during the course of any negotiations with the company, taking into account any progress being made.

Why can the company not broker peace?

Whilst talks continue to find a negotiated settlement, elements within the British Airways management team seem willing to aggravate an already difficult situation by continuing to suspend crew members and disregard agreements.

Just last week saw the company attempt to mount a shameful attack on pregnant employees when they unilaterally changed a long standing agreement protecting pregnant women required to be ‘grounded’ from flying duties to prevent risk of miscarriage and pregnancy related complications.

“this is no way to treat women in an iconic British company like BA”

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“As we have said before, to resolve this dispute costs nothing, it has become vindictive, personal and hugely damaging to BA’s reputation”

The unilateral change – forcing pregnant women to take unpaid leave – rightly generated an extremely angry reaction from a mainly female cabin crew, forcing the company into a u-turn within days following Unites intervention.

There appears, unfortunately, to be a group of senior managers and others within the company whose actions are nurturing a dispute in some misguided attempt to settle old scores, rather than working towards settlement.

We call again on the British Airways board, shareholders and new CEO Keith Williams to reign in the aggressors, review a failing industrial relations strategy and recognise as we do, that this dispute will only be resolved by goodwill, cooperation and agreement.

BA’s reputation and brand take a hit

A recent poll carried out by independent polling company MASS1 on behalf of Unite has uncovered the startling truth about BA’s conflict strategy and its impact on both its brand and reputation amongst key groups within society. The poll, which questioned 190,000 people across the United Kingdom asked what they most associated British Airways with;

- A) Good Service
- B) A great British brand
- C) Strikes (41%)

The results are alarming and should be a wake up call to the British Airways board.

Over 41%, the largest single group, said that they most associated BA with strikes. Good service came in a poor third. This would be bad enough given BA’s premium brand reputation but it is even worse when you examine responses from different socio-economic groups. The two groups most associating BA with strikes are firstly; well travelled, high income couples over 50 and secondly; frequent flying couples over 45.

▶ **These results should be particularly worrying for British Airways as both groups will be in BA’s core demographic, lending further weight to our argument that BA is in danger of both trashing its brand and alienating its high spending core customer base.**

And it’s not just strike action affecting public relations. A second own goal and one that could be equally resolved immediately, is their continued refusal to reverse their discriminatory policy of dismissing cabin crew operating employed at their Hong Kong base at age 45.

▶ **Following claims for sex and race discrimination being lodged by Unite in the UK courts, rather than address the issue BA have resisted the claims at every stage arguing not that their actions are not discriminatory, but that the women should not be able to have their claims heard in the UK.**

▶ **Despite loosing with this line of defence at the Employment Tribunal, Employment Appeal Tribunal and most recently in the Court of Appeal, all of which have backed Unite’s claim that the cases can and should be heard here in the UK, the company still refuses to act.**

We will continue to remind BA of its need to resolve these matters and make ourselves available to meet at any time. We will also keep you informed of progress and thank you for the support and assistance you have, and continue to give, our members at British Airways over this very difficult period.

Yours sincerely



Len McCluskey
General Secretary

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